



## Daily Meditations August 5 - 10, 2019

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 1 and written by the St. Stephen's Meditation Writing Team: Dave Boyd, Pat Gillory, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, T.Cay Rowe, and Carroll Wilson.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link.

### COLLECT, PROPER 13:

*Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### Stick to the Mission

Monday, August 5, 2019

#### Acts 18:1-11

*"When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go the Gentile'." - [NIV, Acts 18:5-6](#)*

A couple of phrases stick in my mind from sermons I have heard about Holy Scripture. The Rev. Karen Siegfrit's words to the effect that "everything necessary for salvation is in the Bible, but not everything in the Bible is necessary for salvation." The Rev. Patrick Gahan says, even if that is so, "all Scripture is prophetic" meaning the Holy Spirit speaks to us through Scripture in our current age, and it spoke to the people for whom it was written in their time.

I don't think the readings from this week are necessary for salvation, but I'll try and find the Spirit's prophetic voice in them.

The books of Acts was written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke. We suspect that Luke was a traveling companion during Paul's missionary travels. These writings sound like entries in a travel diary recording events and impressions of the trips.

We learn of Paul's dedication through his travels of 100s of miles around a

region we now know as Greece, Italy, and the Holy Land. We learn of Paul's zeal to convince people Jesus was the Messiah, and we learn of his frustration and his moves in new directions when people don't follow him.

The lessons I take from these readings today: Stick to the mission and be flexible in execution (like Paul), and pay attention to the journey (like Luke).

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## Gerrymandering

Tuesday, August 6, 2019

### Acts 18:12-28

*"While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. 'This man,' they charged, 'is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law'." - [NIV, Acts 18:12-13](#)*

This week while writing these meditations, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its final rulings for 2019. Among the issues considered were whether gerrymandering was constitutional. As I understand their answer they say: It may be repugnant, but it can't be answered through the constitution; it needs to be addressed through political and legislative processes.

It seems that the Corinthians, like us, try to fight their culture wars and political wars in the courts. By my readings, Jesus didn't have much time for the legalistic Pharisees (ex. [Matthew 23:27](#)). I, like proconsul Gallio, wish we could learn to deal directly with each other without resorting to power struggles like using the legal system.

In their book *Getting to Yes*, Fisher and Ury teach that in a negotiation, you should be able to describe your opponent's position better than they can describe it themselves. That requires a capacity and willingness to understand and care about their needs and concerns and seek solutions that address everyone's concerns. That would be closer to the Kingdom of God Jesus teaches.

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## Slain in the Spirit

Wednesday, August 7, 2019

### Acts 19:1-10

*"Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied." - [Acts 19:4-6](#)*

I have been in worship settings where the congregation was singing in tongues. I have attended worship settings that included healing and people falling on the floor 'slain in the Spirit.' I have attended services where out of curiosity, I prayed for the gift of tongues, and didn't get it, somewhat to my relief. I concluded that Spirit doesn't think I need that gift.

I have a great deal of respect for the Holy Spirit.

The text quoted above through makes me uncomfortable, knowing it has been used to judge whether someone's Baptism is valid, knowing some might judge my relationship with God as lacking since I have been denied a gift of the Spirit. I think these concerns are other examples of culture wars we create to

find meaning instead of living loving God and our neighbors regardless of culture.

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## The Third Commandment

Thursday, August 8, 2019

### Acts 19:11-20

*"Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, 'In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.' Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?' Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding." - [NIV, Acts 19:13-16](#)*

The third of the Ten Commandments: Do not take the Lord's name in vain (Exodus 20:7). A Wikipedia article defines taking the Lord's name in vain as using God's name to commit evil. Jesus' disciples complained about others casting out demons in Jesus' name and Jesus seems to have no issue with it ([Mark 9:38-40](#)). So, something different must be happening here. The sorcerers may be using Jesus' name for their own profit or aggrandizement. [Woe to you prosperity gospel preachers.]

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## Bad for Business

Friday, August 9, 2019

### Acts 19:21-41

*"A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: 'You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is a danger not only that our trade will lose its good name but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the province of Asia and the world will be robbed of her divine majesty.' " - [NIV, Acts 19:24-27](#)*

The Way seems to be bad for business. In the story of the Gerasene demoniac ([Mark 5:1-20](#)) the people of the town asked Jesus to leave after exorcising the Legion demons. The demons had destroyed their swine herds and cost them their livelihoods.

Jesus made enemies of the Temple authorities by cleansing the Temple of the corrupt business of selling sacrificial animals to the pilgrims visiting the temple.

And in today's reading, the teaching of the Way was going to interfere with the Ephesians' commerce in idols.

How might the teaching of the Way, of Jesus interfere with American commerce and capitalism today?

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## Finding Meaning

Saturday, August 10, 2019

## **Acts 20:1-16**

*"There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on." - [NIV, Acts 20:8-9](#)*

I've fallen asleep in hot, stuffy classrooms while somebody lectures on and on. Luckily, I haven't fallen over the balcony and died.

This story is told in a matter of fact manner, tucked between details of the travel itineraries of Paul and his travel companions who included the author of this passage.

What might be the point of the story? Maybe playful teasing of Paul, saying he can be long-winded and bore people to death. Maybe showing that Paul is so committed to this mission, spreading the news about Jesus the Christ, that he doesn't let getting interrupted to do a little raising-from-the-dead stop him from going on (and on).

If all Scripture speak prophetic, meaning it speaks to us today as it did to Luke and the early church readers of this book, where do you find meaning in this story?

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